

Building Permits

Sources: Demography & Workforce Section, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, and the Construction Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Definition: This is a count of the number of residential building permits issued during the year.

Limitations: The permit count excludes the number of new mobile homes placed during the year. A small number of building permits fail to result in a completed unit (the builder may go out of business before the unit is completed, for example). In some localities some residential construction takes place that is not covered by a building permit.

Data Detail: Data Collection. Information on building permits issued by each locality is collected from local zoning and building permit offices by the Construction Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Census Bureau tabulates the information and sends monthly and annual summary reports to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. The Cooper Center re-formats the information and displays it on their web site. The Cooper Center also attempts to collect any non-reported or missing data that the Census Bureau fails to collect from individual permit issuing areas.

Permits vs. Units. The count is of residential building (housing) permits. It is not a count of housing structures, except in the case of single-family units (where one residential unit equals one structure). A duplex housing unit would equate with two permits (one for each unit in the structure). Similarly, a small apartment complex consisting of several 10-unit structures would be reported as 10 permits for each structure, not as one permit.

Excluded Construction. In addition to excluding new mobile homes, permits for commercial construction, alterations to existing residential structures (remodeling, for example), carports, and decks are also excluded.

Estimated Data. In some cases a jurisdiction fails to report complete annual information. If the missing data cannot be collected from local sources by the Cooper Center, then the missing data are estimated and included for that locality.

For More Information:

More information about the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and its operations may be found at: <http://www.coopercenter.org/>

More information about the Census Bureau's Construction Division building permit program can be found at:

<http://www.census.gov/const/www/permitsindex.html>

Cooper Center contact information for building permit questions:

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